

Employee Benefits Committee Monthly Meeting

November 11, 2020

Attendees:

- LaTawnya Burleson, Chair
- Marie Bliss, ex officio
- Sara Leftwich, ex officio
- Leisa Shelor, ex officio
- Brad Klein, Faculty Senate
- Richard Shryock, Faculty Senate
- Richard Ashley, Faculty Senate
- Robert Weiss, Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) Representative
- Pamela Stell, Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs (CAPFA) Representative
- Jennifer Earley, Staff Senate
- Pat Donovan, Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs (CSPA) Representative
- Amanda Hill, Administrative Support

Opening

The regular meeting of the Employee Benefits Committee was called to order at 1:05 p.m. on Wednesday, November 11, 2020 by Employee Benefits Committee Chair LaTawnya Burleson. Brittany Guill May was absent with notice.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on September 9, 2020 were unanimously approved as distributed via email. There was no October meeting due to technical issues.

Discussion

LaTawnya shared that Marie Bliss reached out to her regarding a possible topic surrounding retirement for the committee to take up this year, and Marie and Leisa Shelor shared a presentation about retirement and ways to improve communication and training offerings for employees at different stages of their careers (new employees, mid-career, and those at the retirement consideration phase).

On-demand training modules for employees packaged in ways that cater to these different phases are proposed. The HR talent development group is interested in working with the retirement and benefits team to create these modules. The committee would offer valuable feedback to ensure the content of the modules is beneficial and on-topic.

Leisa shared that retirement workshops typically have a large turnout, and the audience consists of employees at all phases of their careers. These modules would help make this information readily available to all employees, including new employees. This could also include information for wage employees who may not be aware of the benefits available to them. Retirement seminars from vendors (TIAA, ICMARC, etc.) are also available.

Robert Weiss shared that some faculty are not aware that if they receive summer salaries that no retirement contributions are being made during that time. He believes that is an opportunity for improved communications around that issue, particularly for new employees.

Rick Ashley asked if that meant a grant with summer salary does not include university ORP contributions. Leisa confirmed that additional pay during non-contract period does not receive contributions during that period unless it is a converted position. Richard mentioned that someone who is working regularly for 11-12 months per year for a while, this could have been helpful, but that 12-month employees are expected to be present during the summer, but 9-month employees are not.

Brad Klein offered that the modules must be easy to understand for employees who are unfamiliar with the terminology and processes in order for them to be effective. He also suggested that the information should be presented right away when a new employee comes into the organization.

Rick suggested that there should be three separate sessions (tailored for each group) when presentations are held in-person. He thinks there is value in having in-person sessions and on-demand modules. He mentioned that a cheap and easy “but not best” way to do this would be to take each session and record it on Zoom for posting. He pointed out an issue in the uptake depending on how things are framed, i.e. if there is a requirement to opt-in vs. a default. For instance, he thinks there is a large number of employees leaving cash on the table via the cash match option.

Sara Leftwich asked if the committee's role would be reviewing the content and making sure it addresses issues the committee members may be aware of in their areas. She also asked if the sessions would be in addition to in-person sessions. Leisa confirmed both. Rick volunteered to view the retirement module for those close to retirement once it is produced and refined. Marie added that the topics would be split into smaller, shorter modules.

Richard Shryock echoed Brad's earlier suggestion to make sure the content is easily understood and said that could be part of the committee's role, as well. LaTawnya shared that she found value in this as some of the information is something she wished she had previously.

Rick suggested modules be updated and shared as such so that employees can easily see what has changed.

Robert does not think the modules should replace formal in-person sessions but believes they would be very helpful for people who need answers to questions, especially time-sensitive ones. He also stressed the importance of making them short, engaging, and understandable. He suggested having someone who maybe is not an expert presenting so that the information is more accessible.

Leisa asked if any committee members have attended any of the retirement workshops. Several had, and Leisa asked for any feedback. Brad suggested consulting with TLOS when preparing the modules. Rick suggested a module for potential new hires to attract and inform talent. Sara stated this could be a part of the new hire process. Rick also reiterated the value in having on-demand sessions and also being able to attend a live session (in-person or via Zoom). He has not attended a live session because he believes they would be mostly aimed at new hires. If they were more focused on different stages of employees, it would be more useful.

Pamela Stell agreed that the audience should be targeted, especially because employees at different career stages have such different options and goals. Pat Donovan asked for the timeline, and Marie shared that the modules would be completed during the EBC year. LaTawnya asked if staff would be split based on university and state classifications and Leisa said they would not.

Rick shared this committee is a non-random group and suggested offering the various groups within faculty and staff a gift or some kind of incentive if they watch the videos and give feedback. Even a letter of appreciation to a supervisor could be considered valuable. Marie shared that Ann Cronley from retirement and Marsha McKay from talent development would come to the next meeting to consult with the group.

Marie asked Leisa if a resolution was needed to do this work. Leisa believed a resolution would need written in order to move forward. LaTawnya will reach out to April Myers for clarification. Rick believes any change in policy rules would require a resolution, and Rick does not believe this is a policy change so it would not require a resolution.

Committee members should familiarize themselves with the retirement options at the following link prior to our next meeting for discussion.

<https://www.hr.vt.edu/benefits/retirement-financial.html>

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p.m. by Chair LaTawnya Burlison. The next general meeting will be at 1:00 p.m. on December 9, 2020.